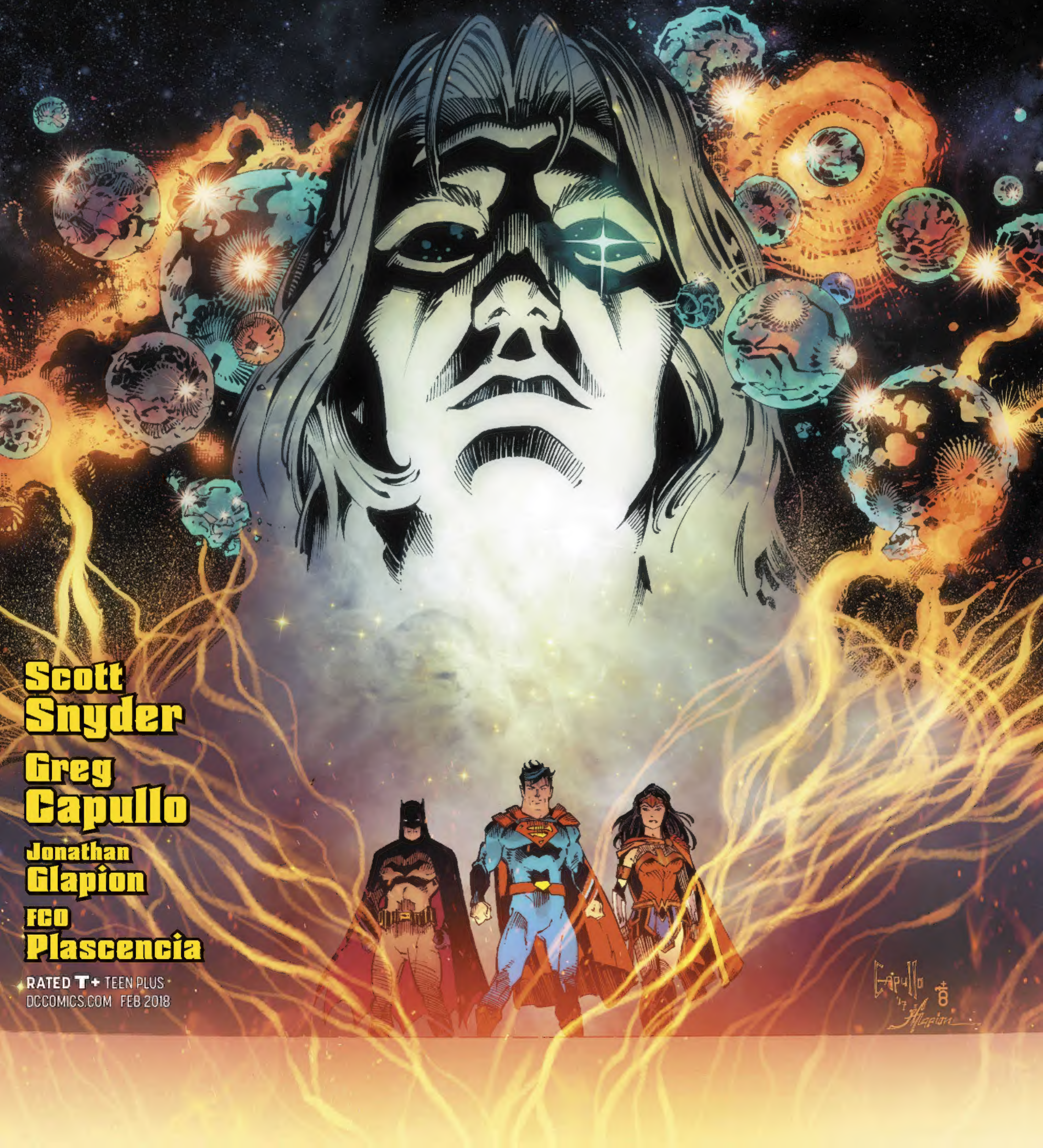




DARK NIGHTS

4

DEATH



**Scott
Snyder**

**Greg
Capullo**

**Jonathan
Glapion**

**ICO
Plascencia**

RATED **T+** TEEN PLUS
DCCOMICS.COM FEB 2018

Capullo
Glapion



DARK NIGHTS

4

METAL



**Scott
Snyder**

**Greg
Capullo**

**Jonathan
Glapon**

**FCO
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RATED **T+** TEEN PLUS
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JIM LEE
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DARK NIGHTS

4

DEFIL



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DARK NIGHTS

4



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Once upon a time, there was a library full of stories that would never be told.

And so after battling the Dark Knights, and barely escaping with their lives, our heroes continue their search for the universe's last bits of Nth Metal, the only material that might be used to repel the World-Ender, Barbatos, and his evil paladins.

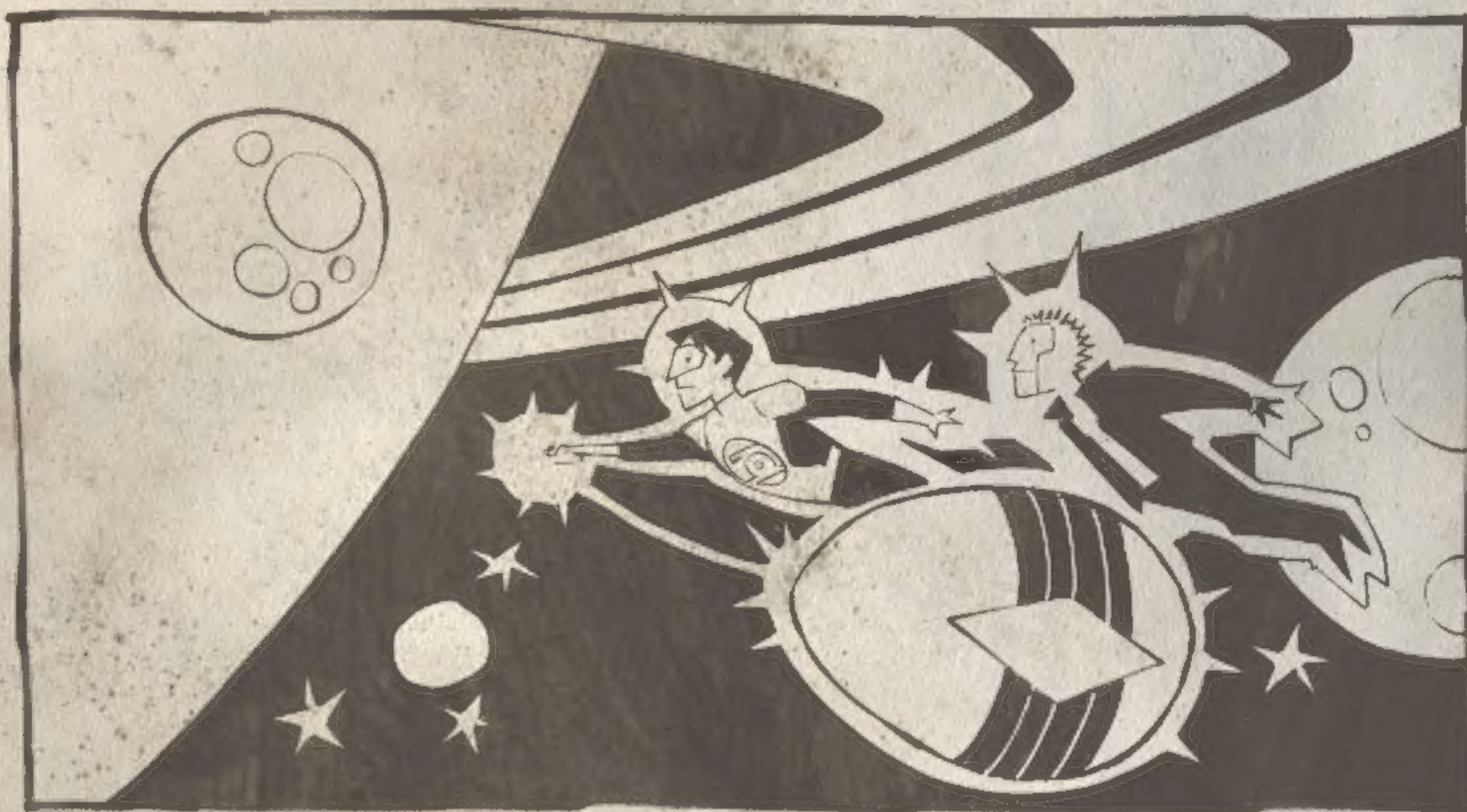


While the ones called Wonder Woman, Doctor Fate and Kendra Saunders make their way to the Rock of Eternity in search of the fabled Mace of Carter Hall, the Hawkman...



...the ocean king, Aquaman, and the mercenary Deathstroke venture to the ancient and forbidden burial grounds of Atlantis, where a trove of Nth Metal is said to be hidden.

Meanwhile, the galactic guardian Green Lantern, the cosmic scientist Mr. Terrific, and Plastic...egg... seek Nth Metal on the hidden planet of Thanagar Prime...



...as the speedmaster Flash and the mysterious and powerful Cyborg search the multiverse for help.

They are hopeful, these heroes, and formidable, but there is something dark they do not know.



Impossible stories destined only to happen in dream, or in nightmare.

Should any of these stories be spoken, let alone actually occur...

...the whole library will **burn**...

...and the world will likely burn with it.

THE DARK MULTIVERSE.

COME ON,
OLD FRIEND.
IT'S TIME.

NO
MORE...
PLEASE...

EASY,
BRUCE.
WE'RE HERE
TO SAVE
YOU.

NO...YOU...
YOU'RE NOT
CLARK, YOU'RE
HIS--

HIS NIGHTMARES?
LIKE WHAT IF HE FINALLY
KILLED YOU AND TOOK YOUR
MANTLE AND IT JUST
FELT...SO GOOD?

THE GOOD NEWS IS,
YOU'RE NO LONGER **NEEDED**
HERE. YOU LURED SUPERMAN,
SO HE COULD BECOME THE
GREAT BATTERY. NOW
YOUR WORLD IS SINKING
TOWARD US.

SOON IT'LL BE
LOW ENOUGH THAT WE
CAN TRAVEL THROUGH
AND **CLAIM** IT.

WE CAN
NOW TAKE YOU
TO **DEEPER**
CORNERS OF
THIS REALM,
FAR FROM
HERE...

...AND FROM
YOUR CLARK.

NOW COME
ALONG, PA WAYNE,
IT'S TIME TO GO
GENTLY INTO THAT
GOOD KNIGHT.

LIKE
HELL IT
IS!



THE REAL CLARK NEVER HAD ANY *IMAGINATION* FOR WEAPONS. IF YOU'RE HIS FEAR OF ME, THEN YOUR TECH IS BASED ON WHAT HE SAW IN *MY* CAVE.

AND I KNOW MY OWN *DAMN* TOYS WHEN I SEE THEM.

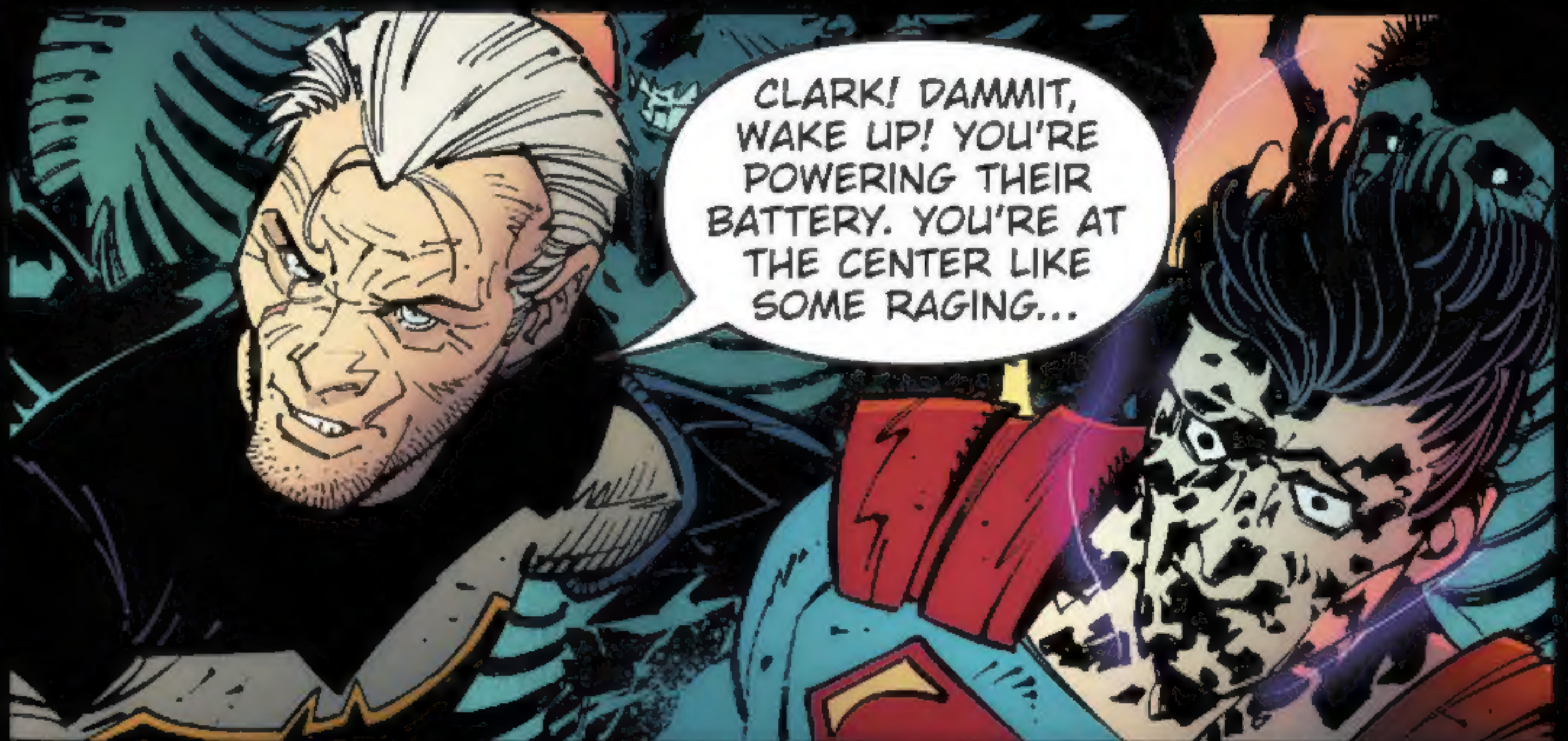
I CALL THIS GAUNTLET "FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH." IT HAS EVERY COLOR *KRYPTONITE* FROM GOLD TO PERIWINKLE. I THINK ONE OF THEM MAKES YOU SPARKLY. ANOTHER MAKES YOUR FLESH DISSOLVE.

I BARELY REMEMBER. SO I GUESS THE QUESTION IS, HOW *SUPER* ARE YOU FEELING TODAY, FARM BOYS?



ANYTHING YOU USE WILL AFFECT YOUR CLARK, TOO. YOU WOULDN'T--

I'VE BEEN LOCKED IN A NIGHTMARE FOR *THIRTY YEARS*. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'D DO.



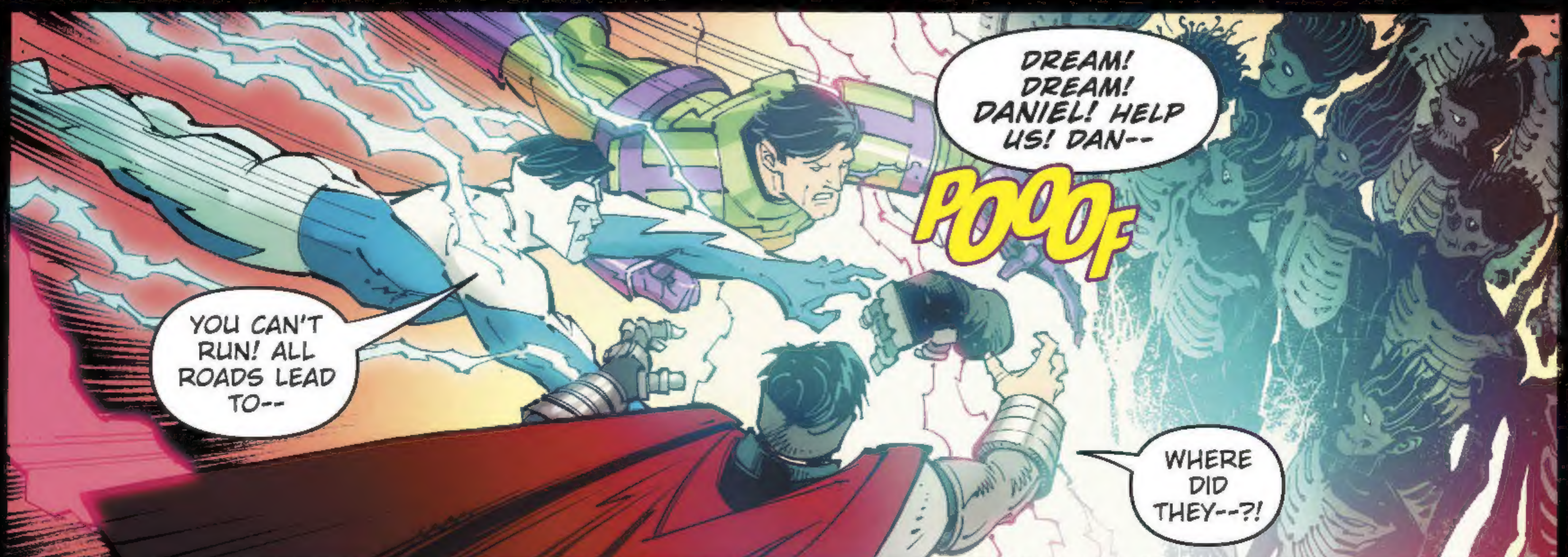
CLARK! DAMMIT, WAKE UP! YOU'RE POWERING THEIR BATTERY. YOU'RE AT THE CENTER LIKE SOME RAGING...



ENOUGH! RUSH HIM!

...BLACK SUN...ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...IN THE TOMB...DREAM.

"CALL ME IN THE PLACE OF THE *BLACK SUN*."



DREAM! DREAM! DANIEL! HELP US! DAN--

POOF

YOU CAN'T RUN! ALL ROADS LEAD TO--

WHERE DID THEY--?!

**THE ROCK OF ETERNITY,
COSMIC CENTER OF
THE MULTIVERSE.**

FATE! WHAT
MONSTERS ARE
THESE?

YOU SHALL
NOT PASS!

THE ROCK IS
PROTECTED!

THEY'RE THE
ANCIENT GUARDIANS OF
THIS PLACE, WONDER WOMAN!
THE PERSONIFICATIONS OF THE
SEVEN SINS. WRATH,
GLUTTONY, SLOTH, AVAR--

PUSHING NUNS
DOWN STAIRS,
GYM SELFIES. WE
GET IT! JUST
TAKE THEM OUT
ALREADY!

WHY
ARE THEY
ATTACKING
US?!

I DO NOT
KNOW...THEY SHOULD
BE *WELCOMING* US,
GIVEN OUR MISSION.
SOMETHING IS NOT
RIGHT!

OH, SOMETHING'S WRONG
WITH THE MISSION? *HUGE*
SURPRISE! LET ME ASK THIS ONE
WHAT THIS ISSUE IS.

ENOUGH,
KENDRA!

**BAM
BAM**

YOU NEVER SUPPORTED THE LEAGUE'S PLAN TO COLLECT THE LAST BITS OF NTH METAL, SO *WHY* ARE YOU *HERE*?!

I SENSE A DARK, UNKNOWN *PRESENCE* HERE.

YOU WILL LEAVE! THE...

I WARNED YOU THIS WAS A MISTAKE, BUT YOU DIDN'T LISTEN!

BY THE GODS, KENDRA, THE ONLY TRUE MISTAKE WE CAN MAKE IS *NOT TRUSTING* EACH OTHER!

YOU NEED TO OPEN...

THUNK

...UP!

...ROCK IS... SACRED...

I COULD USE THE LASSO. BUT WE ARE YOUR *FRIENDS*. WHY ARE YOU SO SURE WE'LL FAIL?

LOOK... THIS PLACE. CARTER LEFT FROM HERE WHEN HE VENTURED INTO THE DARK. THE NTH METAL HERE, IT'S PROBABLY HIS *MACE*.

YOUR BLACKHAWKS SOUGHT TO DESTROY ALL NTH METAL YET YOU NEVER CAME FOR HIS *MACE*?

I...WAS AFRAID. CARTER *REFUSED* TO BELIEVE THE DARK WAS EVIL.

ME...I *KNEW*. IT'S AS IF...*BARBATOS* IS IN MY BONES. TELLING ME...ALL ROADS LEAD BACK TO DARKNESS.

I COULDN'T COME HERE BECAUSE IF I WAS RIGHT...

WHATEVER TRUTH IS HERE, KENDRA, WE'LL FACE IT *TOGETHER*. I PROMISE.

WONDER WOMAN, WE'VE DISCOVERED SOMETHING.

AQUAMAN? YOU FOUND THE NTH METAL?

NO. WE FOUND...

OUTSKIRTS OF ATLANTIS.



...A MURDER.

(MER-DER. TO BE SPECIFIC.)

STORM, IMP, STAY. DEATHSTROKE, COME.

WE STAND ON THE ANCIENT BURIAL GROUND OF ATLANTIS' FIRST KING, ARION.



IT IS SACRED, AND FORBIDDEN TO ALL.

THESE GUARDS WERE TRAINED FROM BIRTH TO PROTECT IT.

LOOKS LIKE YOU NEED A NEW TRAINER.



YOU THERE!

MY LIEGE!

YOUR KIND WAS CHOSEN FOR ITS DEEP-SEA VISION, ANGLER. SO WHAT DID YOU SEE?

DARKNESS, MY KING...THEY BLINDED US...WHO WOULD DO THIS?...TOMB IS SACRED...HOLY...DIVINE...IT IS--



WHOOOPS.

POSEIDON'S BEARD!



YOU **BASTARD!** DID YOU NOT LISTEN?! ANYONE WHO TOUCHES THE TOMB IS **BANNED** FROM ATLANTIS FOREVER!

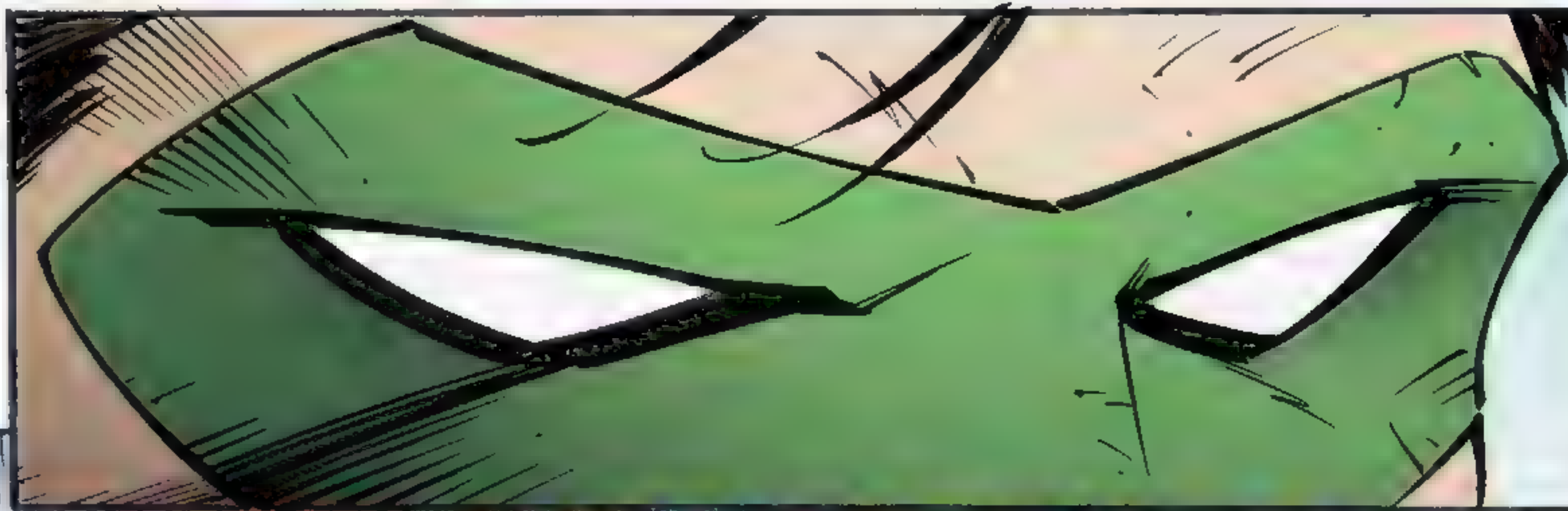
SUE ME, SCALES. I DON'T SPEAK **FISH**. NOW BEFORE YOU **HARPOON** ME, TAKE A LOOK.

GODS...A PORTAL?

I CAN SENSE THE NTH METAL DOWN THERE, TOO. TIME TO SINK TO **NEW DEPTHS**, EH?

DIANA, WE WILL BE GOING...**OFF COMMUNICATION** FOR A WHILE.

GODSPEED, AQUAMAN. GREEN LANTERN, HAVE YOU REACHED **THANAGAR PRIME?**



THE EAGLES HAVE LANDED. WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO MEET THE *HIGH RULER* TO REQUEST WHATEVER NTH METAL IS HERE.

GET IT. AT ALL COSTS.

ROGER. LANTERN OUT.

THANAGAR PRIME.

BASED ON MY STUDIES, THANAGARIAN CULTURE IS HIGHLY *TRANSACTIONAL*. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION.

GREAT. I'LL JUST TELL THEM I LAID THIS *EGG*. THAT SHOULD IMPRESS THEM.

WHAT I STILL DON'T GET IS HOW I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THIS PLACE. THIS IS *MY JOB*, MR. TERRIFIC.

IT'S WHAT WE CALL A *PHASED PRESENCE*, BUILT ON ZOMBIE STAR-GAS. THIS PLACE EXISTS AT MULTIPLE COORDINATES AT ONCE.

WHICH BEGS THE QUESTION, WHAT THE HELL ELSE AREN'T THE GUARDIANS TELLING ME?

IT FEELS LIKE PART OF A STORY I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO UNDERSTAND.

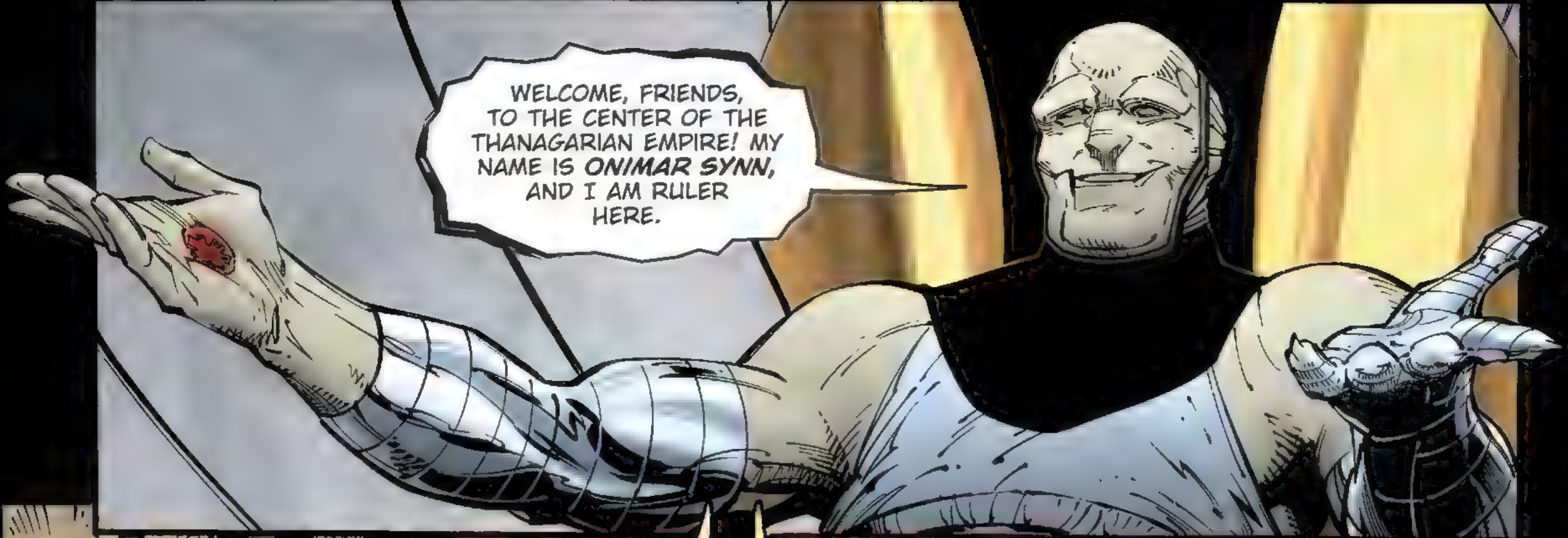
I'VE STUDIED THE MULTIVERSE FOR YEARS, AND IF I'VE LEARNED ANYTHING, IT'S THAT EVERY COSMIC *ANSWER* LEADS TO ANOTHER *QUESTION*. INSTEAD OF FEELING BIGGER, REAL SCIENCE MAKES US FEEL *SMALLER*. AND THAT'S A GOOD THING.

WELL, I'VE BEEN A *SPACE COP* FOR YEARS. AND IF I'VE LEARNED ANYTHING IT'S THAT THE BEST ANSWERS LEAD TO RESULTS.

AND THE *RESULT* WE NEED IS A CRAP TON OF NTH METAL. SO LET'S FIND WHOEVER RUNS THIS PLACE AND--

THAT WOULD BE ME!





WELCOME, FRIENDS,
TO THE CENTER OF THE
THANAGARIAN EMPIRE! MY
NAME IS **ONIMAR SYN**,
AND I AM RULER
HERE.



LORD SYN, WE ARE
HERE ON A VITAL MISSION.
EARTH, HAS BEEN ATTACKED BY
THE DARK MULTIVERSE. WE
COME SEEKING--

NTH METAL,
I KNOW. I
CONSUMED WHAT
WE HAD LEFT. IT'S IN
MY CELLS. I WAS
WHAT **LURED**
YOU HERE.

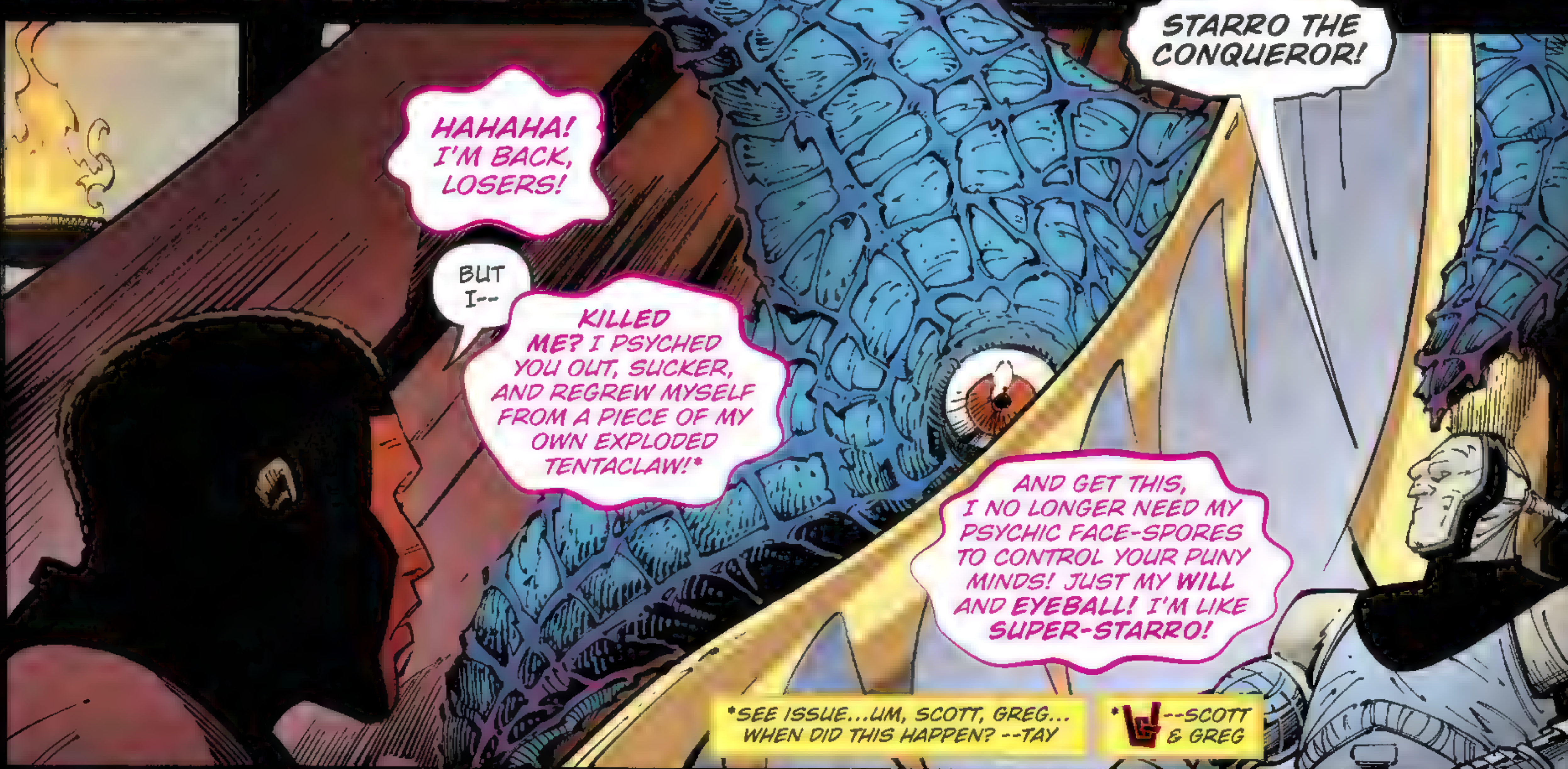
FOR
EONS, I WAS
NEMESIS TO
THE THANAGARIAN
EMPIRE, BUT NOW
I HAVE TAKEN
MY RIGHTFUL
PLACE ON ITS
THRONE...

NOW?

...WITH THE
HELP OF MY
NEW ALLY,
THE MOST
POWERFUL
TELEPATH
IN THE
UNIVERSE...

NOW??

NOW.



**STARRO THE
CONQUEROR!**

HAHAHA!
I'M BACK,
LOSERS!

BUT
I--

**KILLED
ME? I PSYCHED
YOU OUT, SUCKER,**
**AND REGREW MYSELF
FROM A PIECE OF MY
OWN EXPLODED
TENTACLAW!***

AND GET THIS,
I NO LONGER NEED MY
PSYCHIC FACE-SPORES
TO CONTROL YOUR PUNY
MINDS! JUST MY WILL
AND EYEBALL! I'M LIKE
SUPER-STARRO!

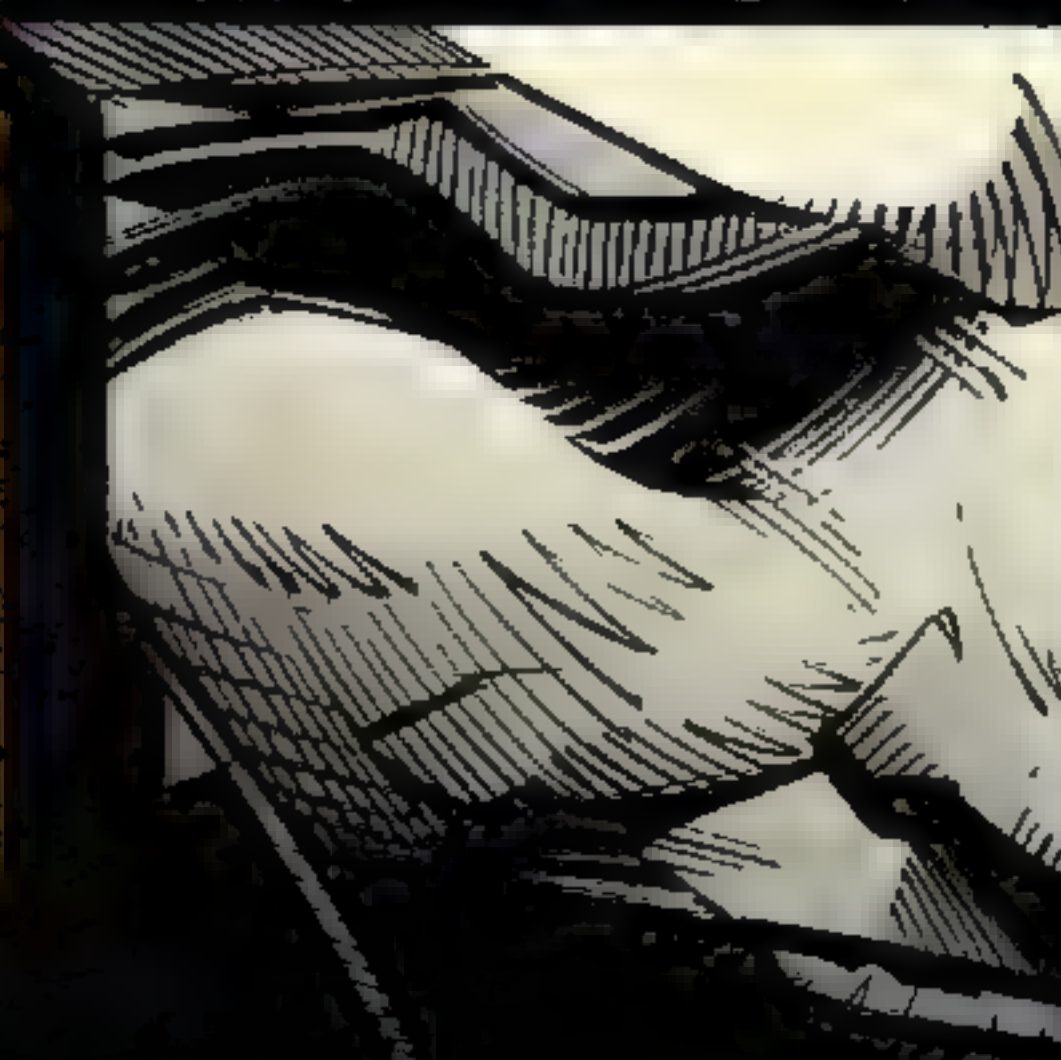
*SEE ISSUE...UM, SCOTT, GREG...
WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN? --TAY

*V--SCOTT
& GREG



LORD SYN, IGNORE
THIS PSYCHOPATH AND
LISTEN TO US! IF BARBATOS
SINKS THE EARTH, EVERY-
THING WILL GO WITH IT,
INCLUDING YOU!

HEH.
SEE, THAT'S
WHERE YOU'RE
WRONG...



THE THANAGARIANS HAVE KNOWN ABOUT THE DARK FOR EONS. IT'S WHY THEY'VE WATCHED YOU SO CLOSELY FROM THIS INVISIBLE PERCH, AND WHY THEY CONSTRUCTED *THIS*...

...THE PHOENIX CANNON. FUELED BY SUPER-METALS, IT'S CAPABLE OF RAISING THE EARTH SHOULD THE LEGIONS OF THE DARK EVER COME FOR THE PLANET. IT'S LOCKED ON TO EARTH'S CORE, AND NEVER CHANGES TARGET.

EVER.

WHEN I FIRST TOOK THIS THRONE, I CONSIDERED USING THE CANNON TO *DESTROY* YOUR HOME ONCE AND FOR ALL. BUT NOW...NOW I'VE DECIDED ON A MUCH *BIGGER* PURPOSE FOR IT.

THANK YOU FOR BRINGING ME THE *FINAL* PIECE I NEEDED.

TAKE THEM! GRAB THE EGG!

GET OFF ME! RING, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH--

IT'S NOT YOUR RING THAT'S THE PROBLEM, CHUMP!

IT'S YOUR STUPID BRAIN...

...I'VE SLOWED THE SYNAPSES IN YOUR FRONTAL CORTEX. YOU CAN'T EVEN CREATE A FULL TRAIN OF THOUGHT ANYMORE, YOU IDIOT! JUST TRY!

IMPOSSIBLE! MY WILL IS STRONGER THAN...

I MEAN, I'M GOING TO...

WAIT, WHAT WAS I...

"WHAT'S HAPPENING?"

BRUCE...
ARE YOU THERE?
WHERE ARE
WE?

I'M HERE.
I...I THINK
WE'RE LOST IN
THE DARK.

No...

...you are
not lost.

YOU!

DO YOU
REALIZE HOW LONG
I'VE BEEN TRAPPED
HERE? YOU DID
NOTHING TO STOP
ANY OF THIS FROM
HAPPENING!

WHY HELP
NOW? WHY NOT
LEAVE US IN THE
DARK IF YOU CARE
SO LITTLE...

Do not
presume you
know what I do
or do not care
about.

I am **Daniel**,
called **the Lord
Shaper**, the
Dreamweaver, the
**King of the Riddle
Realms**.

Some
of your kind
have called me **the
Sandman**. Others,
**the Prince of
Stories**.

And this
story is **far**
more personal to
me than you
understand.

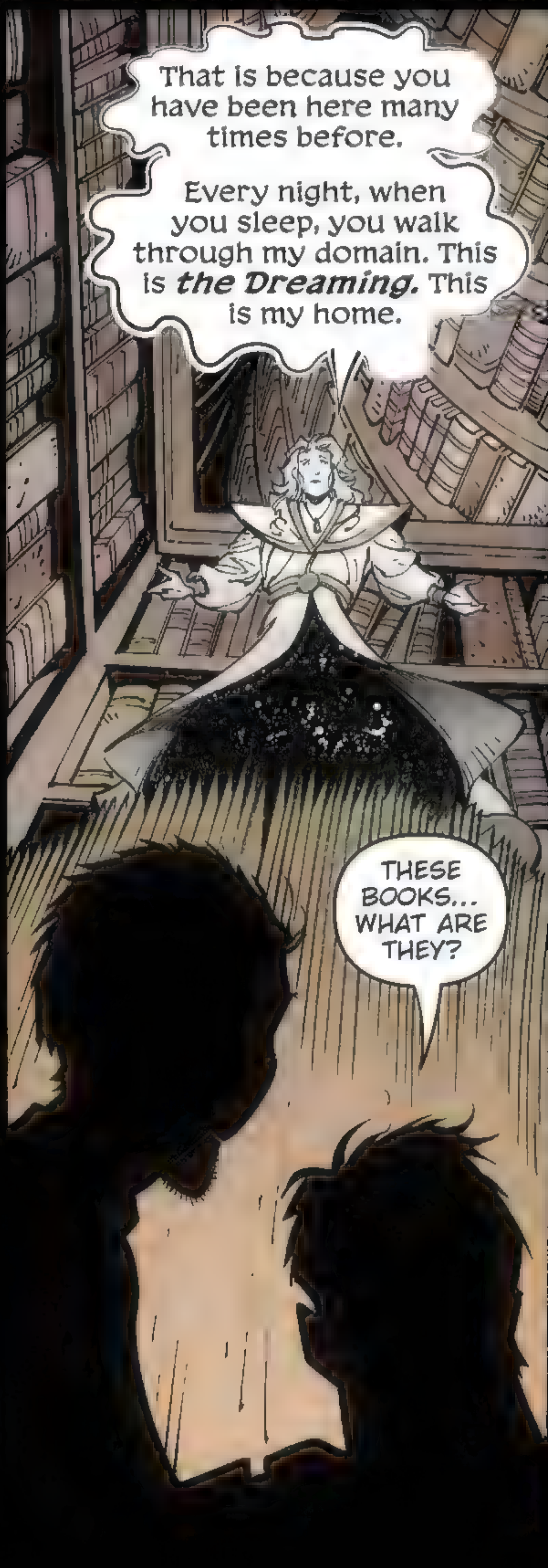


WHERE DID HE... WHAT... WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

I...DON'T KNOW...



IT FEELS SO ALIEN, YET SO... FAMILIAR?



That is because you have been here many times before.

Every night, when you sleep, you walk through my domain. This is *the Dreaming*. This is my home.

THESE BOOKS... WHAT ARE THEY?



They are not mine. This is *Lucien's Library*. This section is reserved for stories that should *never* be told. Made from the *horrors* of the human heart.

But they are becoming reality by the doings of *Barbatos*, the destroyer.

And the library has started to *burn*.

Should this continue, all of the Dreaming will be consumed, and with it, all stories, forever.



THEN JOIN US. HELP US DEFEAT BARBATOS.

I cannot stand beside you, Superman, but here, in this place, I can *give* you something...



I can give you the most powerful weapon in all of creation...



I can give you... a *story*.



From the dark came a great *spark* of molten potential.

The spark created two opposing existences, *Matter* and *Anti-Matter*.

With them, came the brothers, set to *monitor* all that had been created, and a *third* being, tasked to watch over what had yet to come.

This being resided at the *World Forge*, deep in the roiling cauldron of possibility you call the Dark Multiverse.

For eons, it hammered out universes from the hopes and fears of all living beings.

The most stable worlds rose into the *Orrery*. For the twisted, unstable worlds, the Forger had a *Great Dragon* to destroy them and return their energies to the Forge.

BARBATOS.

Yes. But the dragon, a being who knew only destruction, *killed* its master, and thus, worlds that should have been dissolved lived on, and the Forge began to *darken*.

If there is any hope left, it lies at the World Forge, with the last pure, bright metal of possibility, before the fires go dark forever.

Barbatos desires to pull all worlds into the dark, and he is **winning**. Removing Superman from the dark towers stopped Earth from sinking, but it lies at the edge of the cosmic membrane.

Any further and Barbatos will be able to bring forth all the nightmares of the Dark Multiverse.

SO THE NTH METAL WE NEED IS AT THE WORLD FORGE?

The metal of the Forge is **far** more powerful.

What you call Nth metal is but a strain, nearly pure--the **ninth** metal. The eighth, used by the Earth gods, is less so. And down from there. That is why it harms the dragon and its armies.

But they have a greater secret, a **cosmic being** to tip the balance further in their favor, and there is little time left.

WHAT IF BARBATOS HAS ALREADY TURNED THE FORGE DARK?

If it is fully dark... all is lost.

WE'VE COME THIS FAR. WE WON'T TURN BACK.

PLEASE, DREAM... DANIEL... CAN YOU HELP US?

I can create a **passage** for you, from this place. If you walk with **hope** and **wonder** in your heart, it will show you the center of creation...

If **not**, you will be **lost** in the infinite vastness of the Dark Multiverse... forever.

THANK YOU, DREAM.

COME ON, **BRUCE**, LET'S DO THIS.

CLARK... I... I CAN'T.



WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT YOU CAN'T?

DREAM SAID WE HAVE TO HAVE HOPE...WONDER... BUT I--

STOP IT.



CLARK, BATMAN, FOR ME...HE WAS A DETECTIVE AT HEART. HE WAS ABOUT FINDING **ANSWERS**, EVEN WHEN THOSE ANSWERS WERE UGLY OR TERRIFYING.



THAT'S WHAT THAT **LIGHT** IN THE SKY MEANT. IT MEANT IT WAS TIME TO CUT THROUGH THE **FEAR** AND **MYSTERY** AND FIND ANSWERS.

BUT DOWN HERE...ALL I'VE SEEN ARE MY MISTAKES, MY **FAILURES**. AND FOR THE FIRST TIME...I DON'T WANT TO FIND ANYTHING ELSE.



THAT'S WHAT IT **WANTS** YOU TO BELIEVE, BRUCE. IT'S A LIE! YOU'VE BEEN HERE FOR WHAT FEELS LIKE DECADES, I KNOW, BELIEVE ME, BUT YOU **CAN'T** LET IT FOOL YOU!

YOU'RE **BATMAN**, DAMMIT. YOU GIVE **OTHERS** HOPE. THEY SEE YOU AND ARE **FILLED** WITH WONDER ABOUT WHAT THEY CAN ACHIEVE.

NOW, **COME ON!** WE NEED TO FIND OUT IF THE FORGE IS STILL **BRIGHT!**

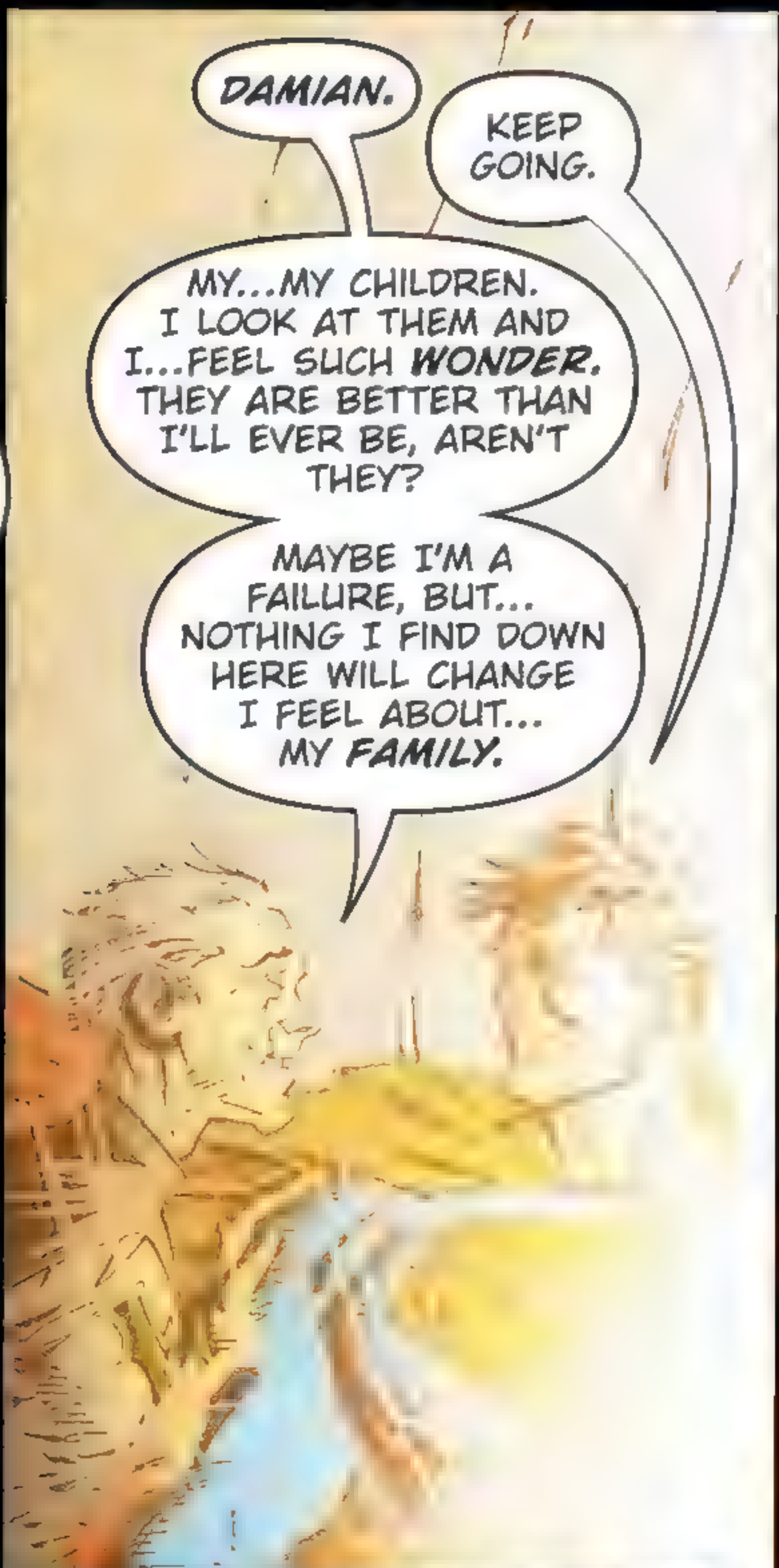


...I...

THERE HAS TO BE SOMETHING! **ONE THING** THAT FILLS YOU WITH WONDER!

ONE THING THAT CAN HELP US **SAVE** OUR HOME, BRUCE!

...HOME...



DAMIAN.

KEEP GOING.

MY...MY CHILDREN. I LOOK AT THEM AND I...FEEL SUCH **WONDER**. THEY ARE BETTER THAN I'LL EVER BE, AREN'T THEY?

MAYBE I'M A FAILURE, BUT... NOTHING I FIND DOWN HERE WILL CHANGE I FEEL ABOUT... **MY FAMILY.**



GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK, OLD FRIEND.

DON'T GET SAPPY ON ME, KENT. I'M **BATMAN**. LET'S DO THIS THING.

YES, SIR.

IS ANYONE OUT THERE?



LANTERN?
MR. TERRIFIC?

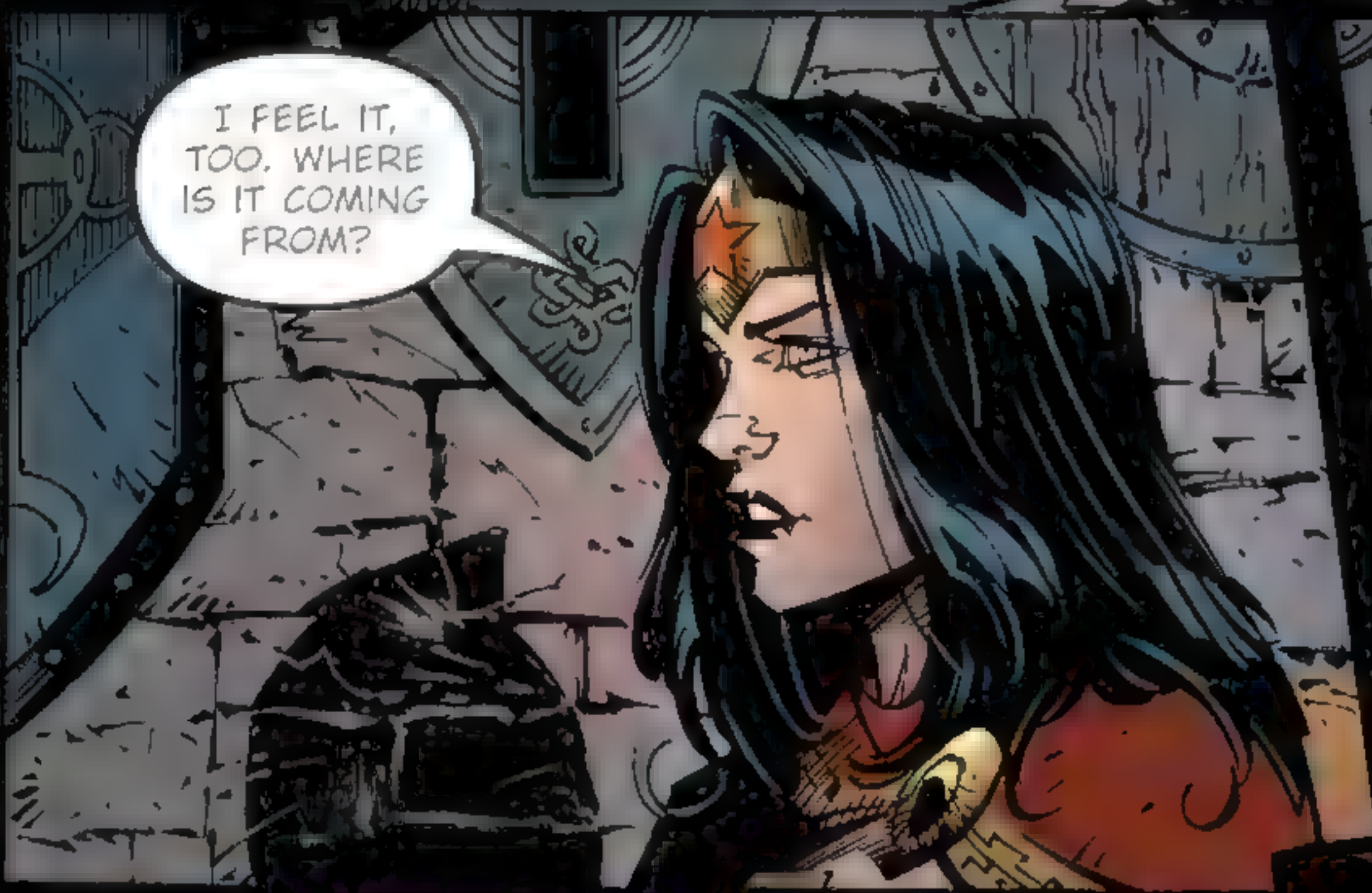


AQUAMAN!
DEATHSTROKE?!
COME IN!

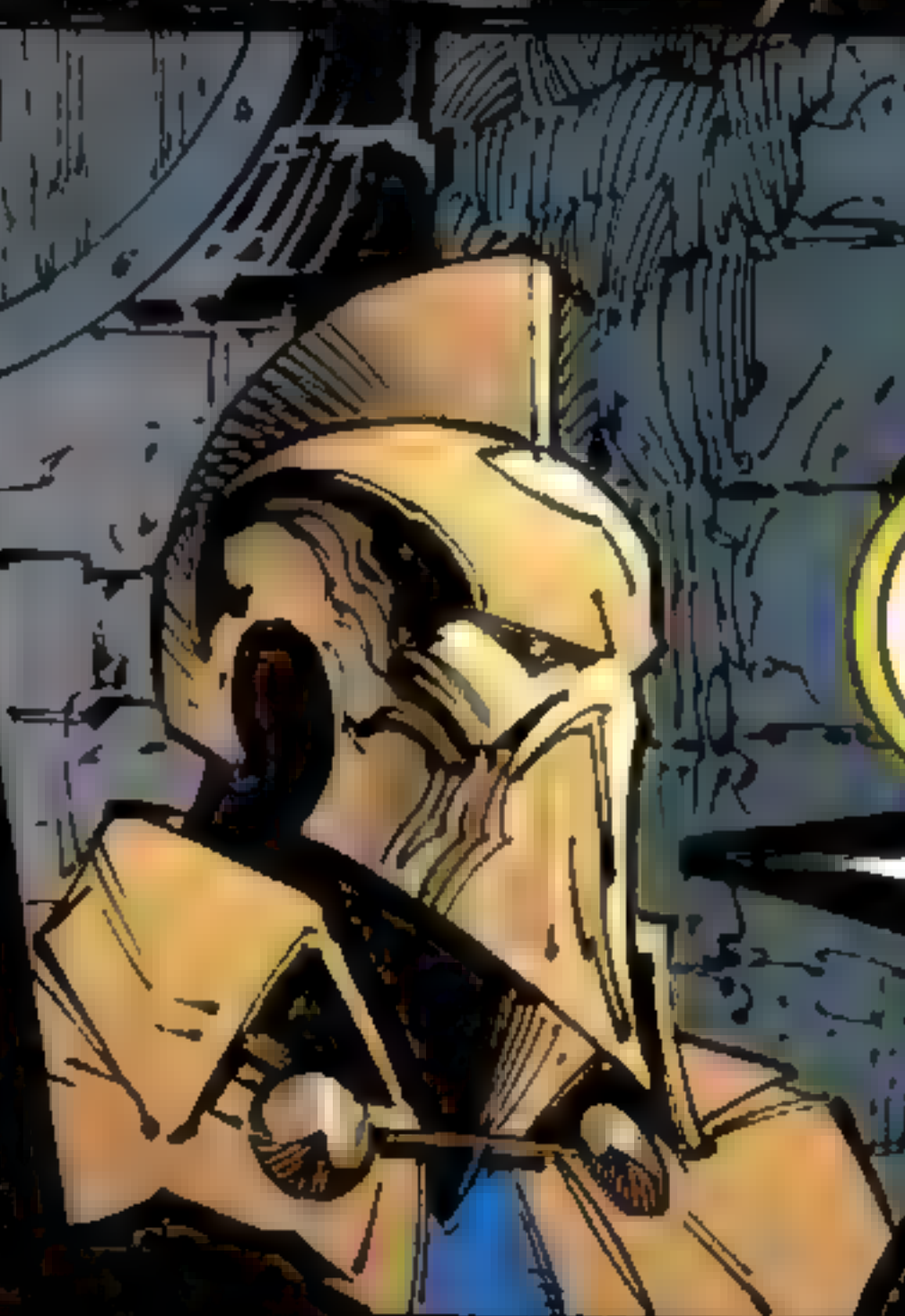


NOTHING.
DOCTOR, DO
YOU SENSE THE
MACE ANYWHERE
NEARBY?

FAINTLY...
AS THOUGH IT IS
HIDDEN. BUT THERE
IS SOMETHING
ELSE...



I FEEL IT,
TOO. WHERE
IS IT COMING
FROM?



IT IS ON A COSMIC
SCALE...CATASTROPHIC
ENERGY. I FELT IT BEFORE,
BUT IT IS STRONGER
NOW.
IT MUST
BE COMING
FROM SOMETHING
POWERFUL...
OR...



...SOMEONE.



KENDRA.
WHAT ARE
YOU--

IF ONLY
YOU'D LISTENED
TO ME, WONDER
WOMAN...



NOW STAY BACK!



MY GOD...
IT'S THE
ASTRAL BRAIN
OF THE ANTI-
MONITOR! SHE HAS
BROUGHT IT TO
COMPRESSED
FORM!

KENDRA,
WHAT
IS THAT
THING?!

KENDRA! IF PURE
ANTI-MATTER PASSES
THROUGH THE MULTIVERSE'S
CENTER AND HITS THE
DARK MULTIVERSE, IT
COULD--

**BLOW UP THE
DARK ONCE AND
FOR ALL!**

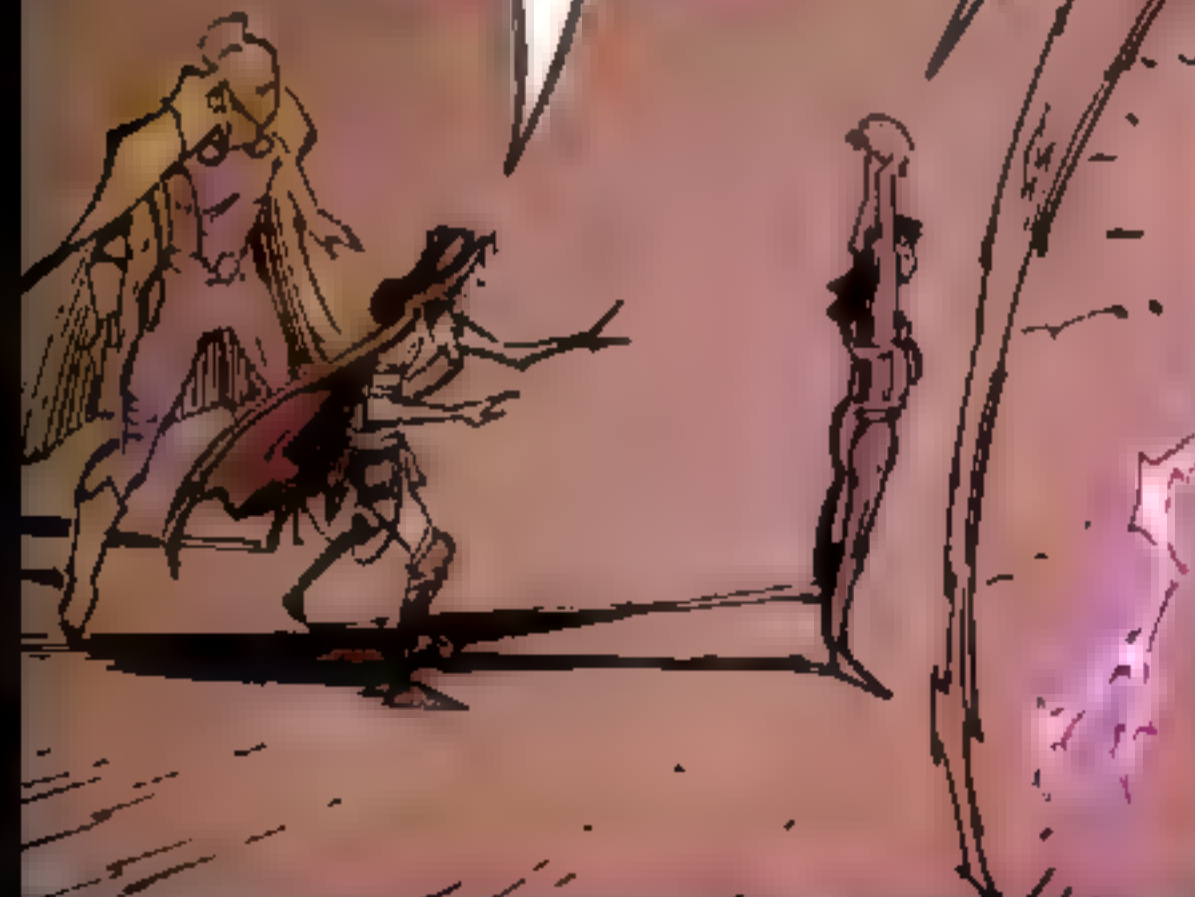


I KNOW.
THE **COUNCIL
OF IMMORTALS**
ENTRUSTED ME...IT'S
THE ONLY WAY TO
BE SURE!

NO! YOU COULD
END UP KILLING
EVERYTHING!
PLEASE!

YOU DON'T
KNOW...WHAT
IT'S LIKE...

TO DOUBT, TO
LOSE HOPE?! OF
COURSE I DO, WE
ALL DO! BUT BATMAN,
SUPERMAN AND
CARTER ARE ALL
DOWN THERE,
AND--

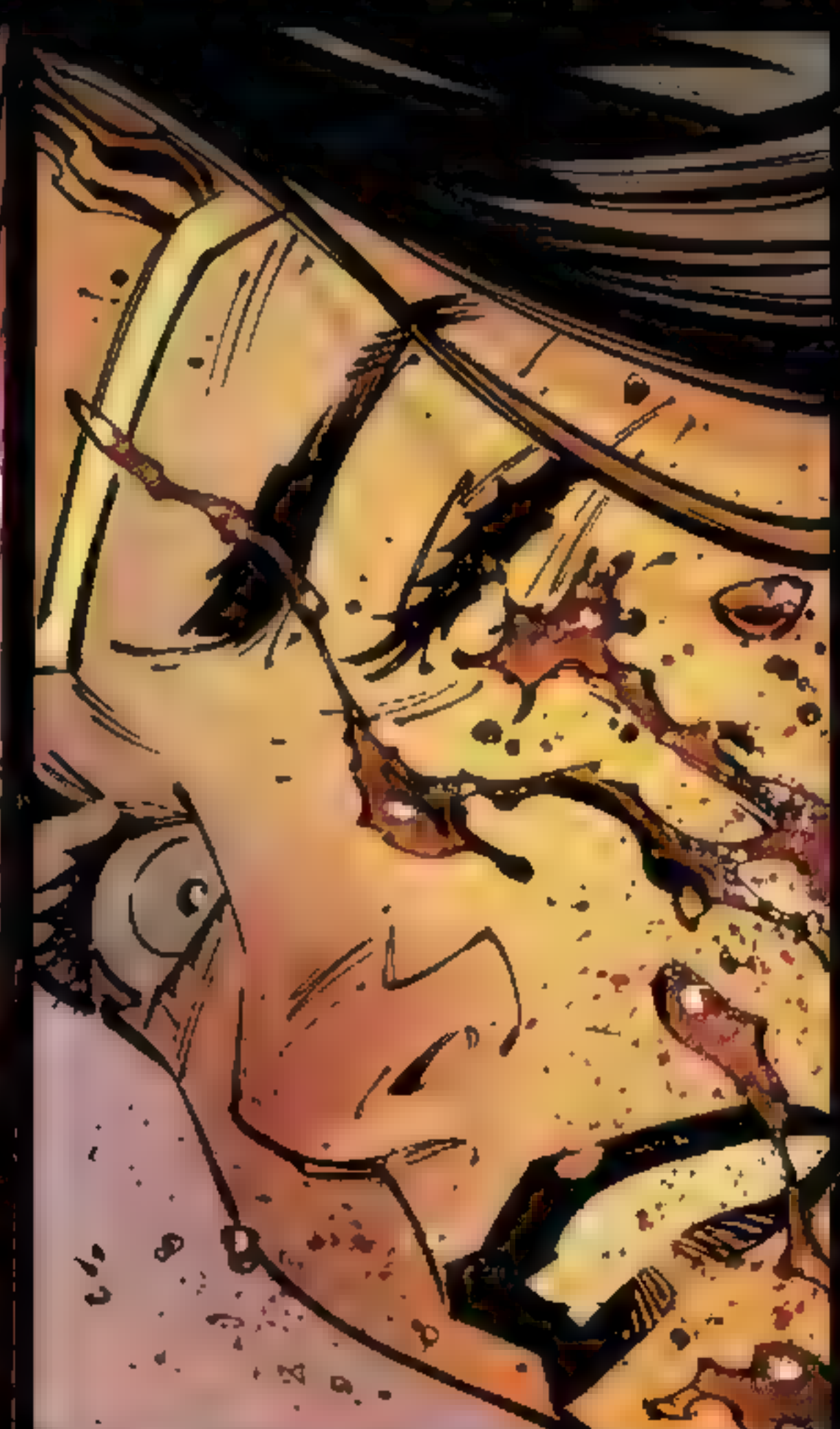


NO!
CARTER
IS GONE!
I HAVE
TO--
AGH!



KENDRA?! DOCTOR,
WHAT'S **WRONG**
WITH HER?!

**UHH! NO!
THE PLAN.
HAVE TO--
ARGH!**



WHAT'S
HAPPENING TO
MEEEAAAHH!

RRRIIPPP



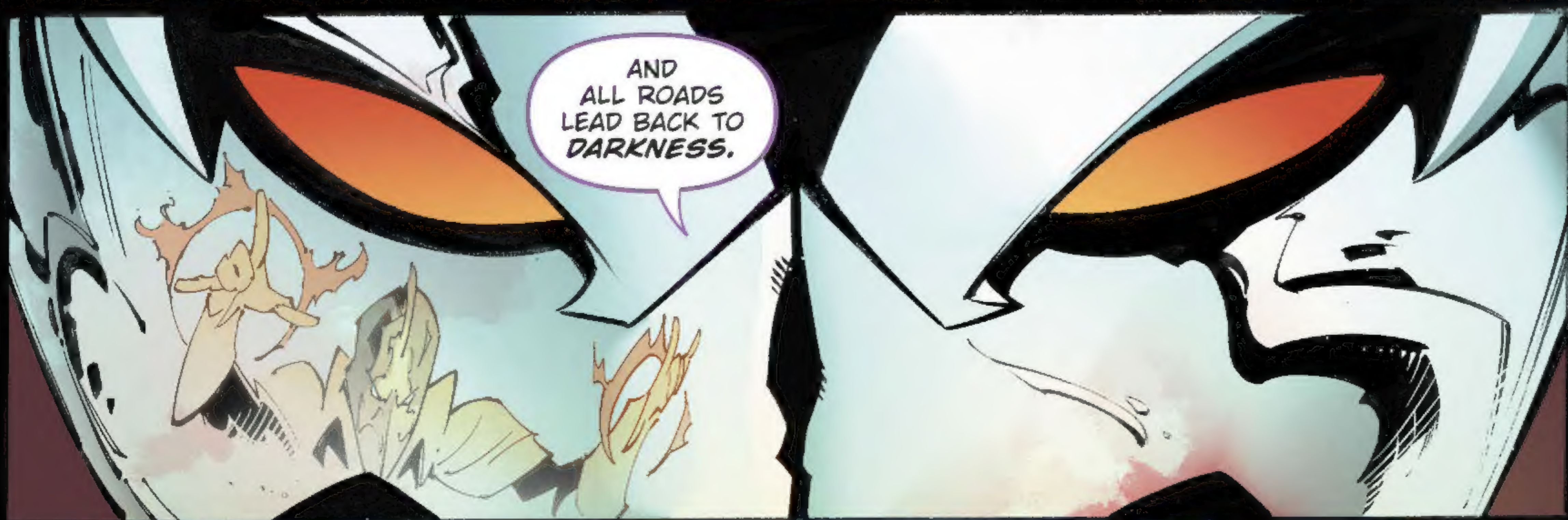
GREAT
HERA...

KENDRA...



NO, NOT
KENDRA.

I AM, LADY
BLACKHAWK.




AND
ALL ROADS
LEAD BACK TO
DARKNESS.



NO! WE
WILL SAVE YOU
AND RIDE THE
ANKH FROM
HERE ON--

KRAKAKKOOOM

RIDE
THIS.



THERE
WILL BE NO
SAVING ANYONE
TODAY.

BLACK
ADAM?!
BUT WHY--

I AM ONE OF THE
IMMORTALS, AS WAS
KENDRA. I HAVE LIVED
LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW
THEIR PLAN STANDS NO
CHANCE AGAINST FORCES
OF THE DARK.

SO VANDAL
SAVAGE AND I MADE
OUR OWN DEAL WITH
BARBATOS.

NOW GIVE
ME THE BRAIN,
AND I WILL MAKE
THIS PAINLESS.
ALMOST.

NEVER!

My lord, the book
burns in your hands!
So many books burn...

I know, Lucien,
but I will read on
as long as I can...

The heroes keep hope in their hearts, and through the whirling dark, they reach the Great Forge.

But as they near, they see...

NO.

FORGE OF WORLDS.

They are *too late*.
The Forge has gone forever...dark.


THIS...THIS
CAN'T BE HOW
IT ENDS.

CARTER...

CARTER HALL,
IN HIS *JOURNAL*, HE
SWORE. THE FORGE
WAS SUPPOSED TO
BE A PLACE OF
CREATION, OF
BEGINNINGS.

Then came a booming
voice from behind them.

I WAS
WRONG,
BRUCE
WAYNE.



I AM CARTER HALL,
DRAGON OF BARBATOS,
KEEPER OF THE
DARK FORGE.

AND
THERE ARE
ONLY ENDINGS
HERE.

And with those
words, this book,
and all hope,
burns to ash.

Next:
Night of the
Hawks!